

Fairy Tail 211

Chapter 211: Before the Semi-Finals

Earth Land, Ishgar, Kingdom of Fiore, Magnolia.

October 15, x784.

"Huh?" Natsu exclaimed as he sat up from where he was lying on the ground in front of the bleachers. "Where am I? What happened? I'm hungry."

"Oh, great." Gray drawled. "He's awake."

"Hey, Natsu, how are you feeling?" Lucy asked.

"Other than being really hungry, I think I'm fine." Natsu replied while scratching his head. "But why am I on the ground?"

"Do you remember your fight with Max?" Gray asked in a seemingly uninterested tone.

"Uh...." Natsu stopped to think about the answer to Gray's question. Then, he replied a moment later. "That's right! I lost because of that stupid ring out rule! I want a rematch!"

"And because you were shouting crap like that, Erza knocked you out." Gray continued.

To that, Natsu stiffened momentarily before looking around to see where Erza was.

"So, what happened with the rest of the match?" Natsu asked after he noticed that Erza was not close by. "We're fighting Alfonzo's team next, right? OH, and where's Erza?"

In response, Gray and Lucy lowered their heads without replying.

"Um... Guys?" Natsu asked, tilting his head in confusion.

"Oh, Natsu!" Happy shouted happily as he flew over at that moment.

Looking towards Happy's voice, Natsu noticed that he was holding a paper food container in his hands as he flew over. On top of that, the scent of deep fried fish was wafting from the container.

"Hey, Little Buddy." Natsu said as he opened his arms to hug Happy. "Mind sharing some of that food with me?"

Immediately, Happy stopped in his tracks after hearing Natsu's question. Then, he slowly started to back away while eyeing Natsu suspiciously.

"Oh, come on, Happy." Natsu said indignantly while watching Happy get further away. "I just want a little something to eat before we have to fight Alfonzo and Lici's team."

In response, Happy looked at Natsu weirdly. Then, he shifted his attention to Gray and Lucy, who still had their heads lowered.

"I guess they didn't tell you, huh?" Happy said as he started approaching Natsu again. Then, he opened the container and reached into it, pulling out a piece of fried fish a moment later. "Your team lost against Alzack's team."

Smiling happily after seeing the food in Happy's outstretched hand, Natsu reached out for it. However, when he heard that his team was out of the tournament, he froze. An expression of disbelief making it on to his face a moment later.

"How?" Natsu asked, finding Happy's answer hard to believe. "Did Erza lose? Who did she fight?"

"Erza fought Mystogan." Happy replied, placing the piece of fish in Natsu's hand. "And she won."

"Then, that means..." Natsu said, trailing off as he turned towards Gray and Lucy. However, he could not continue after seeing the expressions on their faces.

A few seconds of awkward silence hung in the air before it was eventually broken.

"Sorry, Natsu." Lucy said quietly in a sad tone.

"Yeah, Alzack and Bisca beat us." Gray said, clenching his fists in frustration.

"Why do you two look so gloomy?" Natsu asked in a confused tone.

That question caused both Gray and Lucy to raise their heads and look at Natsu with just as much confusion.

"Because we lost and couldn't move on to the next round of the tournament?" Lucy said, though it sounded more like a question due to her confusion.

"Yeah, but I lost, too." Natsu replied. "So, I can't really say anything about it, can I?"

"Yeah, I guess you did." Gray said, his expression returning to his normal one after Natsu's reply. "But I guess we should have expected that from a loser like you."

"What did you say, Ice Cube?" Natsu said with a scowl. "I'm actually surprised you're even dressed, you frozen pervert."

"Huh? I am?" Gray asked, looking down at his clothes. "Helly yeah! I'm still dressed."

While Natsu looked at Gray with confusion after his change in attitude, Lucy looked at him with a deadpan.

"It's only been three minutes since the last time you put your clothes back on." Lucy replied with a deadpan.

"Lucy sure pays a lot of attention to Gray's clothes. I think she loves~~~~ him." Happy said with a mouthful of fish from Natsu's shoulder. "Hmm... This fish is alright, but it's not as good as Alfonzo's."

"Shut it, Cat." Lucy barked back while frantically looking around to see if a certain someone heard what Happy had to say..

"But seriously, where is Erza?" Natsu asked.

"I saw her at a stall that was selling strawberry shortcake not too long ago." Happy replied.

Just like Happy said, not too far away from the bleachers, Erza was sitting alone under a tree while slowly eating a few slices of strawberry shortcake.

"They looked so alike... Is Mystogan really Jellal?" Erza asked, thinking aloud while poking her fork into a slice of the cake. "But how is that possible?"

"You've been thinking so hard about another guy, I'm kinda jealous." A familiar voice said, breaking Erza out of her thoughts.

Surprised by the sudden voice, Erza looked in its direction. What she saw was Alfonzo leaning against a tree next to the one she was sitting under with a smile on his face.

"Alfonzo..." Erza said with a hint of guilt in her tone. "It's not what you..."

Before Erza could finish, Alfonzo appeared next to her. Then, he snatched her fork out of her hand and stuffed a piece of the strawberry shortcake into her mouth.

"I was just kidding." Alfonzo said with a smile. "I know what's bothering you. And what's under Mystogan's mask."

In response, Erza's eyes widened to a comical degree. Still, she chewed the strawberry shortcake in her mouth with fervor.

"And I know what you're thinking after seeing his face." Alfonzo continued. "But things aren't like what you're thinking. I guarantee, they aren't the same person."

"How do you know that?" Erza asked, her expression loosening significantly.

"Well, when I went to save Mira, Elfman, and Lisanna a couple years ago, I ran into him before he joined the guild." Alfonzo replied. "And you probably never noticed this but he doesn't have any magic power in his body. So, that's how I knew they were different."

"Now that you mention it." Erza said, looking down with a contemplative expression on her face. Then, she looked up to Alfonzo once again as she continued. "But why do they look so alike?"

"That's not my story to tell." Alfonzo replied, combing his fingers through Erza's beautiful scarlet-red hair. "But Mystogan is a good dude, I'm sure he'll tell you sooner or later."

Nodding in understanding, Erza decided to put this topic to the back of her mind until she got the chance to talk to Mystogan. Instead, she looked at Alfonzo with sparkling eyes. Then, she opened her mouth with expectation in her expression.

"Ah~~~~~."

"Hahaha!" Alfonzo laughed before poking the fork into another piece of the cake. "I guess I can spoil you for a bit. Beating Mystogan was pretty impressive."

Meanwhile, in the medical station, Gajeel also had just woken up.

"It still feels like the world is spinning." Gajeel said, still looking like he would puke at any moment.

"Oh, Gajeel, you're awake." Levy said from next to Gajeel's sick bed.

Looking in Levy's direction, Gajeel took in the sights of the other competitors who ended up in the medical station. He was surprised to see some of them while the rest were expected.

"Ha! Jet got his ass kicked, too." Gajeel said with a smirk. "I guess that means we're out of the tournament, huh?"

"Yeah." Levy replied with a nod. "After your fight, Jet fought Sun, and lost."

"Sounds about right." Gajeel replied with a nod.

"I can't hear you, but I know you're talking trash." Jet replied, louder than usual.

"He got hit by that chick's [Voice Magic], huh?" Gajeel asked, a bit of sympathy in his tone. "That must be rough."

While Jet continued to glare at Gajeel because he could not hear what he said, Levy and Droy looked at him in disbelief.

"That almost sounded... kind." Droy muttered.

"Yeah, it did." Levy replied with a nod while reaching her hand towards Gajeel's forehead.

Smack!

In response, Gajeel swatted Levy's hand away when it got to close.

"What are you doing, Pipsqueak?" Gajeel asked skeptically.

"Checking to see if you had a fever." Levy said, waving her stinging hand around. "You've never said anything nice to any of us since you joined the guild. So, I thought you might still not be feeling too well."

Gajeel looked at Levy in confusion while she and Droy did the same to him.

"Something nice?" Gajeel asked, his confusion turning into a scowl. "What are you talking about?"

"You just showed Jet sympathy." Droy pointed out.

"Oh, that." Gajeel replied, enlightenment flashing past his eyes. Then, he waved their concerns off. "I wasn't sympathizing with the simp. I was just thinking that I wouldn't want to face that [Howling Voice] spell. I mean, my senses are way better than any of yours. Well, except for my sense of simping, that is."

"Well, I guess you're okay." Levy said while shaking her head at Gajeel's reply.

Droy, on the other hand, looked at Gajeel as if he were ready to start a fight.

On the other side of the medical station, Gozaburo woke up around the same time as Gajeel.

"Damn it." Gozaburo muttered, slamming his fist into his sick bed.

"Boss." Masa said, perking up at Gozaburo's utterance. "How are you feeling? Does it hurt anywhere."

"Only my heart hurts, Masa." Gozaburo replied while reaching up and grabbing a hold of his chest, just above his heart. "I lost to a little girl not much older than Sun. After seeing that, my precious Sun will never look up to her daddy again."

In response, Masa opted to remain silent. He really had no idea how to respond to something like that. However, the silence was broken when a third person cut into the conversation.

"I think that ship sailed a long time ago." Ren said, walking over with a white lab coat over her normal clothes. "You stopped being the center of her world and the most talented person in it years ago."

"Don't say it, Ren." Gozaburo said while gritting his teeth. "I already know that. I don't need to hear it pointed out to me. *Sigh* This was my chance to fight that boy and show Sun that I'm still the best."

"It's time to let that go, Gozaburo." Ren said, shaking her head at her husband's antics. "Sun found someone special. Stop trying to get in the way of that."

"That's not what I meant, Ren." Gozaburo said. "Regardless of how I felt about it at first, I know that boy makes Sun happy. Hell, it's been over three years since they were engaged. So, I get it. Even if I don't really like it. But I still want her to look up to me."

Hearing that, Ren's expression softened. Then, she sat down on the edge of Gozaburo's sick bed and took one of his hands into her own.

"If you're really missing having someone to shower with your attention, we could always have another one." Ren suggested, whispering into Gozaburo's ear with a seductive smile on her face.

In response, Gozaburo raised his eyebrows and looked into Ren's eyes. Then, when he saw that she was serious, he could not help but smile in return.

A moment later, however, Ren's expression turned serious.

"But if you go overboard on your doting like you did with Sun..." Ren said in a menacing tone. "... I'll take the baby and leave. Like I should have done a few years ago."

The serious expression on Ren's face caused Gozaburo to straighten his back. Remembering back to when Ren started packing her bags to leave him after one of his outbursts about Sun being with Alfonzo, he could not help but start dripping cold sweat down his back.

"I promise I won't let things get like that ever again." Gozaburo declared with a solemn expression on his face.

"We'll see." Ren said, eyeing her husband skeptically.

'I pray for your success, Boss.' Masa thought to himself while trying to blend into the background. 'I wonder what Fujishiro is doing? Did he come to see the fights?'

"*Sigh* Ultear really is strong." Mirajane muttered as she woke up on another sick bed in the medical station. "But at least I gave us a chance by getting us to the third round."

"Big Sis, you're awake." Elfman said from the sick bed next to Mirajane's. "You got beat up pretty bad, too, huh?"

"Yeah, Ultear is strong, after all." Mirajane replied while turning her head towards Elfman.

"Yeah, that Meredy was pretty strong, too." Elfman replied. "Never thought I'd see another fourteen year old that strong after Alfonzo and Elicia. She beat me up like a real---"

"Finish that sentence, and I'll make sure you spend the next week in one of those beds." Mirajane said in a tone of annoyance.

In response, Elfman snapped his mouth shut. He already knew he was on thin ice after calling Mirajane a real man so many times. He had also been warned by the majority of the women in the guild about it as well.

"And let's talk about your fight, Elfman." Mirajane said, her eyes narrowing. "I thought I had made it clear that you should never underestimate your opponent. So, what the hell was that? Why would you only use a [Partial Take Over]?"

"I wanted to see what she could do before I went all-out." Elfman replied while looking away from his sister's angry glare.

"That may be true." Mirajane replied without changing her tone or expression. "But why didn't you use one of your [Full Body Take Overs]? You could have done the same thing with one of those, right?"

"I wanted to conserve magic power." Elfman replied, his voice growing softer, sounding a lot like it did before the accident two and a half, or so, years ago.

"Stop with the excuses, Elfman." Mirajane said sternly. "You already answered that question before I even asked it."

"Then why did you ask?" Elfman grumbled.

"What was that?" Mirajane asked, raising her voice a little.

"Nothing, Big Sis." Elfman replied, shrinking back at Mirajane's glare.

"Good. Mirajane replied with a nod. "Like you said earlier, you didn't expect Meredy to be that strong. To be honest, neither did I. Or anyone else who was watching the fight, for that matter."

Shocked by Mirajane's response, Elfman looked at her with wide eyes.

"Don't look at me like that." Mirajane replied with a wry smile. "I can't see through everyone's strength like that."

"But you almost never lose." Elfman said. "I've never seen you get caught off guard like I was."

"That's because I never go easy on my opponents... Ever." Mirajane replied. "I always go at them with full strength. But that's not enough to win against everyone. I mean, I've still never beaten Alfonzo or Elicia. And I doubt I could beat Laxus, either. On top of that, I'm only fifty-fifty with Erza and Ultear, too."

Thinking about how she had never been able to take the advantage over her rival, Erza, Mirajane gritted her teeth. Then, she exhaled a sigh. After that, she looked at the other two people in sick beds next to hers and Elfman's.

"*Sigh* It looks like Lisanna and Juvia lost, too." Mirajane said with a gentle smile. "I knew it would end that way. Especially after knowing they would be fighting Cana and Laki."

"Then, why didn't you have one of them go up in the second round?" Elfman asked curiously.

"Because I expected Ultear to go up in the second round to try and clinch the victory before it went to the last round." Mirajane replied. "And I'm the only one on our team who could win against her... for now."

Elfman lowered his head at Mirajane's statement.

"Though, you could give her a pretty good run for her money if you didn't hold back like you did against Meredy." Mirajane continued, leveling her glare at Elfman once again.

"She's right, you know." Another voice added from a nearby sick bed. "If you used everything you had, it would be tough to put you down. In fact, there's no way Meredy would have been able to beat you, either."

"*Sigh* I know, I underestimated her." Elfman said in a dejected tone. "And that's not what a real man does."

{"The semi-finals will begin momentarily."} Warren announced directly into the heads of all the Fairy Tail wizards using his [Telepathy Magic]. {"The next match will be between Team Alzack and Team Steel Threads. Please report to ring side so we can begin the match as soon as possible. Thank you."}

Exchanging glances, Ultear, Mirajane, and Elfman decided that they would leave the medical station and go to watch the semi-finals. So, they all got out of the sick beds while Elfman picked up Lisanna and Juvia, whose injuries had already been healed by Porlyusica, and returned to their seating areas.